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REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE DESERT LOCUST TECHNICAL GROUP

FAO, Rome 18-20 February 1992

INTRODUCTION

The Thirty-first Session of the DLCC held in Rome from 24 to 28 September 1990 recommended the establishment of a Desert Locust Technical Group to:

1. study and report to the FAO Desert Locust Control Committee on all technical and scientific matters pertaining to the control of the Desert Locust;
2. report and advise on specific issues referred to the Technical Group by the DLCC;
3. oversee and follow-up recommendations of the DLCC;
4. advise the Secretariat on the agenda for future meetings of the DLCC.

The first meeting of this Technical Group was held in Rome from 18 to 20 February 1992.

PARTICIPANTS

The following participated:

Members: S.S. Bamofleh (Saudi Arabia)
T. Ben Halima (Morocco)
A.M. Karrar (DLCO-EA)
M. Shafi (Pakistan)
L. Soumare (OCLALAV)

FAO staff: J. Roffey
A. Hafraoui
N. Mahjoub
H. Niggemann

AGENDA

The following agenda was adopted:

- Opening of the Meeting
- Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman
- Nomination of the Rapporteur
- Adoption of the agenda
- Follow-up of the recommendations of the Thirty-first Session of the DLCC
- Status of Desert Locust management strategies
- Desert Locust research
- Training
- Agenda for Thirty-second Session of the DLCC
- Presentation of the conclusions of the Technical Group meeting to the Director of AGP.
- Any other business
- Date and venue of the next meeting

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

Chairman of the Meeting: T. Ben Halima

Vice-Chairman: M. Shafi

Rapporteur: L. Soumare

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Discussion of the agenda items led to the following conclusions:

1. Follow-up of the recommendations of the Thirty-first Session of the DLCC

1.1 Creation of a Desert Locust Technical Group

This meeting represents the implementation of this recommendation. However, for administrative and procedural reasons, the Technical Group has so far only met once instead of twice a year as recommended.

The Technical Group proposes meeting once a year to ease the financial burden of International Trust Fund 9161.

1.2 Closer association of scientists and institutions of countries affected by the Desert Locust in the activities of the UNDP/FAO Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

Though FAO has taken steps to implement this recommendation, the Technical Group requests that it urge the SAC to increase its linkage with research staff and institutions in countries affected by the Desert Locust. This would make Desert Locust research more appropriate to the situation in the field.

The Technical Group deplored the lack of information, at the country and regional organization level, on SAC-supported projects and requested that FAO take the necessary steps to remedy this situation.

The Technical Group suggested that the SAC Chairman be associated with its activities. The Group also noted that relations between the DLCC and the SAC were not clearly defined and hoped that this would be rectified at the next DLCC meeting.

1.3 Management of insecticide stocks and destruction of obsolete pesticides

FAO has prepared a project for the implementation of this recommendation. Its first phase, lasting two years, will centre on stock inventories and management on the one hand, and on pilot trials for the destruction of obsolete pesticides on the other.

The Technical Group considers that the first stage is too long given the information already available and the work accomplished in this connection. However, the Technical Group requests that the FAO Secretariat prepare a detailed paper on this matter for submission to the next session of the DLCC.

1.4 The inclusion of environmental aspects on the DLCC agenda

As requested by the DLCC, this item features on the agenda of the Thirty-second Session of the DLCC.

As the present terminology is vague, the Technical Group proposes the following phraseology: The Environmental Impact of Insecticides used for Desert Locust Control. The Technical Group suggests that the DLCC put forward a general recommendation calling for environmental impact to be considered in all Desert Locust control activities.

1.5 Training

This recommendation requested an examination of the training needs of the DLCC Member States and a short- and long-term training programme, to be partly financed by international TF 9161. Given the difficulties experienced by FAO in implementing this recommendation and the priority attached to high-level training, the Technical Group requests that FAO submit a training programme in acridology for high-level staff at the next

DLCC Session planned for June 1992. Part of this programme will be financed by TF 9161 from 1993 and the remaining costs can be met with FAO Commission and other funds.

1.6 Meteorology and remote sensing

Though these two areas did not feature as a DLCC recommendation, their importance in Desert Locust control led the Technical Group to examine them and to draw the following conclusions:

- There is an urgent need to establish a sufficient number of automatic meteorological stations in the gregarisation areas.
- The "greenness" vegetation maps do not always reflect the real situation in the field and arrive late in the recipient countries, undermining their usefulness. The Technical Group therefore proposes that remote sensing research be continued with the involvement of the countries and organizations concerned so that this technology can be put to better use.

1.7 FAO Regional Commissions in South-West Asia and the Near East.

The often-repeated recommendation regarding the re-establishment of the post of Regional Locust Officer in the FAO South-West Asia Commission has not been acted upon. In the meantime the post of Regional Locust Officer for the FAO Near East Commission has been abolished.

The Technical Group deplors this situation which is detrimental to FAO's coordinating role in Desert Locust control in these two regions, and requests that FAO do all it can to re-establish these posts and to ensure that these Commissions operate in a satisfactory manner.

1.8 Joint Indo-Pakistan border surveys

There were no joint surveys between these two countries during the 1991 season as recommended by the DLCC.

The Technical Group recognized the importance of these joint surveys and requested that the conditions be established for their regular occurrence.

2. Position on Desert Locust control strategies to be undertaken during periods of recession and upsurge

There are in principle two control strategies:

- Preventive control
- Plague elimination

The first is based on the assumption that all gregarizing populations can lead to an upsurge and that the prevention of these upsurges will prevent a plague. This strategy, which has been adopted since the 1960s, requires close monitoring of all Desert Locust activity and of environmental conditions in recession periods as well as the treatment of all gregarious and aggregating populations. The disadvantage of this strategy is that pesticides are applied against many populations which present no threat to crops.

The second strategy, upsurge elimination, is based on the practice whereby, as Desert Locust population levels rise, an increasing proportion of the population occurs as discrete targets (hopper bands and swarms). The risks inherent in this strategy are that swarms may form in inaccessible regions and then migrate to cultivated areas.

With the withdrawal of dieldrin, which permitted rapid and effective action against late-instar hopper bands over large areas, the two above strategies need to be carefully reconsidered.

Different interpretations of these two strategies and problems of terminology emerged during the

Technical Group discussions. However, the Group opted for a preventive strategy because of:

- lower costs
- less environmental pollution
- fewer resources needed.

Nevertheless, the Technical Group requested that FAO present a detailed information note on the two strategies at the next DLCC session.

3. **Desert Locust research**

The Technical Group noted that:

- most Desert Locust research is conducted in the developed countries, outside the affected countries;
- the affected countries receive no or little assistance for the development of their research institutions and activities;
- the affected countries do not generally participate in the selection of research topics;
- the above observations have always been made by the DLCC, and that no channel has so far been found to solve these problems and to spur cooperation between research institutions in developed and developing countries to improve Desert Locust control.

4. **Agenda of the Thirty-second Session of the DLCC**

FAO submitted a draft agenda which was examined and amended as follows:

1. Opening of the Session
2. Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Election of the Drafting Committee
5. The Locust situation October 1990 to October 1992
 - (a) Desert Locust
 - (b) Other species
6. Control measures undertaken
7. Implementation of the recommendations of the Thirty-first Session of the DLCC
8. Report of the Desert Locust Technical Group
9. Review of existing control potential
10. Assistance provided to countries and regional organizations
11. Project for Preventive Control of Desert Locust in West and North-West Africa
12. Report of the UNDP/FAO Scientific Advisory Committee on Desert Locust Research
13. Desert Locust research
14. Training
15. Obsolete and expired pesticides. Insecticide stocks and destruction of obsolete pesticides
16. Environmental aspects
17. International Trust Fund 9161: Contributions and Expenditures
18. Status of Regional Locust Commissions and Organizations
 - (a) Near East Commission
 - (b) North-West Africa Commission
 - (c) South-West Asia Commission
 - (d) DLCO-EA
 - (e) OCLALAV
 - (f) IRLCO-CSA and follow-up of recommendations made at their annual meetings
19. Any other business
20. Date and venue of next Session
21. Adoption of the report

5. **PRESENTATION OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING TO THE DIRECTOR OF AGP**

Mr Papasolomontos, Director of AGP Division met the members of the Desert Locust Technical

Group, after the agenda items had been discussed, to learn what conclusions had been reached.

The Chairman of the Meeting thanked Mr Papolomontos for his interest in the locust problem and outlined the conclusions reached, emphasizing in particular the following points:

- High-level training: the essential role to be played by this type of training in improving all aspects of locust control was strongly emphasized. It was also pointed out that without this training any action would be a palliative with no long-term impact on locust control.
- Research: the affected countries should be involved in the identification and implementation of research if this is to be successful and permanent. An urgent appeal was launched to donors financing and/or participating in locust research to foster genuine collaboration leading to successful research.
- Cooperation at the regional level: locust control can only be conducted rationally if the responsibilities at its various administrative levels are fully met. The enormous difficulties that currently exist at both the national and regional levels only delay a solution to the locust problem. These difficulties result from the loose implementation of the strategy adopted by FAO and the affected countries for more than half a century. Remedial action and a new conceptual approach are urgently needed. Otherwise FAO, which has always assured locust control coordination at the international level, might find its role increasingly diminished and might in the short or medium term unfortunately lose this responsibility altogether.

Mr Papolomontos followed the Chairman's report with interest and made a brief statement addressing the points raised.

He emphasized the importance of high-level training and promised that FAO would do all it could to ensure that this was provided.

With regard to Desert Locust research, Mr Papolomontos noted the need for more active participation of the affected countries at the level of the SAC and in the field.

As for the difficulties being experienced by the Regional Commissions, Mr Papolomontos confirmed the important role they played but specified that the current financial problems of the Organization prevented it from providing the support requested in the immediate future.

6. MISCELLANEOUS

Project for Preventive Control of Desert Locust in West and North-West Africa.

This 5-year project has been reformulated by FAO and was examined by the affected countries and the funding agencies in May 1991.

FAO conducted a further reformulation on the basis of the observations of the beneficiary countries.

The Technical Group requested that this new reformulation be submitted to the affected countries for their consideration before being presented to the funding agencies, and remarked that the report of the meeting of May 1991 did not entirely reflect the points of view of the participants.

FAO has also formulated a short-term programme for the monitoring of gregarization areas in Sahelian countries for the 1992 agricultural season. Given the urgency of this programme, the Technical Group requested that FAO take the necessary steps to secure its timely funding.

7. Date and venue of the next meeting

The Technical Group suggests that its next meeting be held in Rome on a date to be determined by FAO.